1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

governmental structure which tied together these separated local governments into any larger whole. Thus, as Greece moved toward modern nationhood, the type of local government which had existed under the Ottoman Empire began to wither.

One Athenian professor said to me that after ten years of revolution (1821–1830) the people wanted a king who could end anarchy and bring order. They had to accept a centralized government and put up with laws not natural to the country but which were necessary if Greece were to appear "civilized" enough to get loans from abroad. "We still need a legal system agreeing better with our country," he concluded. This is one reason, he thinks, why the peasant tries to get around the laws; he does not look upon them as his laws, as Greek laws.

During the first forty years of this century, the greatest changes in community life occurred under Venizelos in 1912 and under Metaxas in 1935. Venizelos, for instance, refashioned the old demes, or local units consisting of several villages, and made each village a unit responsible for supporting many local services under a community council and president. The deme still had the taxing, police, and judicial powers. The central government attempted to supply teachers for communities, a step which meant much less local autonomy but which was essential if Greece were to have a uniform system of education. Many other activities which local governmental bodies had handled up to this time had to be approved by the nomarch (administrator of the nomos) and ministry. Even the Constitution of 1927, though leaving to local government matters managed directly by the citizens, left the definition of "local matters" so vague that the demes and communes were at the mercy of the legislators and ministries who, by law and decree, could "outline their powers, procedures, and revenues." [4]

Metaxas, after abrogating the Constitution of 1927, imposed on the total Greek population "modern" methods of hygiene, childrearing, and education. He even attempted to introduce early weaning and the use of bottles. In community affairs, local elections were abolished and local officials could be dismissed and replaced by the Minister of the Interior.

Today, according to one authority:

> The local government units in Greece are demes and communes. There are 217 demes and 5,746 communes. Demes, under the 1912 law, were those units with 10,000 or more population; but recent amendments allowed so many exceptions that there are now 144 below this minimum standard. Communes are supposed to have 300 or more people and an elementary school; but this standard was also relaxed so that now there are many below this figure. As a matter of fact, half of the communes today have less than five hundred inhabitants.[5]

Since such small population centers cannot support all of the expected services, some kind of amalgamation of units is thought desirable. But how

1:Sanders Z-5)4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

toration, but most of the job had been done by "personal work" (*prosopike ergassia*). This is an old, old practice whereby the community council assigns the families or adults of the village so many days of "voluntary" labor on a task that needs to be carried out in the community interest. In general, a community may call for ten days of work (or pay in lieu thereof) from each able-bodied villager, although it need not do this if there are no projects requiring this much labor.

"Everybody who could," according to the president, "went to the quarries and cut limestone; others cut wood. We paid laborers to construct the lime kiln and then produced our own lime at a saving of twenty million drachmas [over $1300 then]. While the construction crews were building the new road through here, we brought the stones they unearthed to the church site and, with the help of good masons, put up the structure." Here again local government was getting something done.

On another trip in 1955, returning from a visit to Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain on a peninsula in Northern Greece, I saw a notice nailed to a plane tree near the main fountain of the village. It looked official, so we went up to have a look. It announced the auctioning off of the right to collect a certain kind of tax:

Announcement of Bidding for the Lease of Farming of Animal Sale Tax for Fiscal Year 1955–56

The President of the community of Neochori declares that . . . a bidding is announced for Sunday 17 June between 10–12 A.M. in the Community Building for the highest offer to lease the farming of taxes on animal sales during fiscal year 1955–56.

The amount of 3000 drachmas [$100] has been determined as the first offer and the amount of 300 drachmas as a guarantee to be deposited by any participant. The tax has been determined at two percent on any sale of animals. Citizens having debts in the community are not accepted. The amount of lease shall be paid in four equal installments, the last to be paid on 31 March 1956. All expenses will be charged to the lessor.

Here the local authorities were following the ancient practice of "farming" out the taxes to the highest bidder who, in turn, was expected to derive from rigorous collection much more than he paid for the right. Every time a bleating goat or an ox changed masters, the successful bidder would collect his 2 percent of the sale price.

The community council has other duties in addition to managing a community-owned radio, rebuilding churches, and collecting taxes. It conducts local elections as well.[4] By 1951 the political situation had stabilized to the point that local elections could be held throughout the country. Of the registered voters, a greater proportion of women than men voted, thereby showing their appreciation of the right of suffrage. From nine to thirty-one

1:Sanders Z-5H (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

councilmen could be elected in demes and from five to fifteen in communes, on the basis of population.

An account of local officialdom taken from almost any commune in Greece closely resembles that from other communes, although the number of council members may vary. Here are the facts for Gourie, near Mesolongi on the western coast of Greece.

The village has the following officers: a president and a deputy president, who replaces the former in his absence. The president is the paid governmental representative in the village. The secretary is a salaried, permanent employee of the community, whose duty is to keep all community records, conduct all correspondence, and do all other clerical work. The village council: it is the duty of this council to help the president solve the various community problems, to attend regular meetings and take the necessary resolutions. The councilmen are unpaid officers; the president is paid a yearly allowance of one thousand drachmas for his extra expenses. The council and the president were elected during the last national municipal elections. Later the president was elected by the councilmen.

The old school building is now used for the community office. This has two rooms; one is used for the president's office and the other for the secretary's; its furniture is very poor; it has six chairs, a divan, and a bookcase used for filing.[1]

Of course, villages differ in the facilities provided for the community-council officers. In Tsepelovo, an Epirus village, the office of the council was well furnished. Cushioned benches lined the walls. Other furniture included a long table at which the secretary worked; a storage chest; a glassed, built-in cabinet containing shelves for filing; four straight-back wicker chairs; and another cabinet built into the wall which contained a store of medical supplies. The room was decorated with an *Ohi* sign, commemorating the refusal by Metaxas to capitulate to the Italians early in World War II, pictures of the royal family, portraits of local dignitaries, and two pictures of Eisenhower. Some American Mission material lay on the long table. This council, too, had the responsibility of taking care of the high-powered American Mission radio, similar to the one in Phrangista.

As I talked with the village officials here and throughout Greece, I tried to understand their conceptions of their jobs. I knew what the law stated to be their functions but wondered how closely their own ideas corresponded with the legal description. In an Attica village (1953) I found a council consisting of eight members and the president. The secretary there, as elsewhere, had no vote at council meetings, but introduced the topics on the agenda. I asked this secretary whether he considered himself an employee of the community council or of the central government. In Communist countries to the north I had known that the secretary of local government was usually a trusted Communist imposed on the community and

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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621 631 178 a distinguished man in any company. Authority seemed to rest as naturally upon his shoulders as the callouses rested upon his palms. This easy relation between village officers and the people of their community had definitely not been characteristic in 1947.

621 631 652 Local government in Greece was suffering, however, from a chronic and serious handicap. Local authorities lacked funds, and could seldom do anything beyond routine administration without borrowing from some agency of the central government.[1] The result of this situation was to extend greatly the real authority and influence of the central government over local affairs. Village and municipal authorities spent a great deal of time waiting in the anterooms of officials of the central government in the hope of securing money with which to carry through some local improvement.

621 651 652 178 631 Villages had always depended on the Agricultural Bank or on one of the central ministries for finding money for any important project; cities and towns until 1949 had financed their local expenditures mainly through excise duties imposed upon goods brought into the municipality. Before that year, long lines of peasant carts, waiting their turn at municipal excise stations, were a frequent sight in the outskirts of every town. Internal tariffs were abolished in 1949, however, and the share of the cigarette tax, levied nationally, which was assigned to municipalities in lieu of these excises proved generally inadequate. Town governments were therefore in poor shape financially, and any public improvements that were made came from special grants or loans from the central government.

633 365 1. The municipality of Athens, for example, had been insolvent for as long as anyone cared to recall. The problem was such that in 1955 and again in 1956, the Athens Power Company threatened to cut off the supply of electricity to municipal institutions unless some of the back bills were paid.